

Europäisches Zentrum für Antiziganismus Forschung

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Starting Situation

While hate against Jews, the persecution and extermination of the Jewish people, old and new Anti-Semitism has been experiencing great amounts of public attention and broad scientific analysis for a long time, this does not hold true in any equal measure for the concern towards the Sinti and Roma minority. Many Projects on Roma and Sinti were done and financed, but they were only "nice looking, but useless".

Antiziganistic prejudices remain to be unsolved and manifestly fixed within wide sections of the population, but also within the media and the social institutions. They are publicly expressed unfiltered.

The current living conditions as well as participation attempts of the Roma and Sinti population are clearly hampered by this, as can be seen in the example of Hamburg and in the international context.

This situation is not new at all. But it demands a new scientific and logical approach. Up until now, research and projects have mainly been initiated and carried out by non-Roma and –Sinti. They did not change any of the existing problems, more often even enforced them, by intending to "explain" the "Gypsies" to the majority population. This way of doing research on the Sinti and Roma stems at least from a lack of understanding for the ways of living and thinking of this European people, if it does not outright encourage the Antiziganism of the majority population. The practice of objectification degrades the people to mere research objects: Gypsies just are the way they are: uneducated, criminal, nomadic.

The Antiziganism of this research attitude is obvious in the ignorance towards the reasons for these labels: Denial of education, and currently relocation to schools for mentally handicapped children, thus exclusion from professional careers and material security, expulsion or Ghettoisation.

Whose life and limb is threatened, naturally thinks about escape. Who is neglected educational opportunities gets detached from the culture of the majority population. Who is denied the acquisition of material goods will try to get them in different ways. These are experiences from a history of persecution already lasting for centuries. They have been deeply engraved in the consciousness of the Sinti and Roma, and also explain the latent distrust towards the majority population and the administrative forces.

To adequately investigate this problem situation and come closer to a solution, a scientific attitude is required that does not do research about human beings, but with

them, together uncovering the reasons that produce these problems. And these are primarily found in the Antiziganistic mentalities and structures of the majority population. Thus, it is simply not enough to concentrate the scientific focus and the social-educational work on the Sinti and Roma, but necessary to aim at a sensitisation in the consciousness of the majority population for the problematic situation of the Sinti and Roma people, who are still being discriminated.

Various social institutions and organisations lend themselves as fields of research, such as the police, justice, administration, politics, school, media, sports, church, economy, science and so on.

The Problem of Antiziganism is building up one on another

1. Extenuation of the Problem (it is still political correct to be an Antiziganistic because none is there to say it is wrong and why it is wrong)
2. Exclusion of the Roma und Sinti (Latent Apartheid)
3. Vindication of the Antiziganism (lead to the conservation of the Antiziganistic prejudices)

In the Apartheid you're not speaking with the People you're discriminate but with there Non-Roma Experts. This is a practise that where implemented from the beginning on the Roma and Sinti societies. It didn't solve the problem, instead it even enhanced the problem and the differences between the Majority Populations and the Roma and Sinti. In fact Europe never left the level of the Middle Ages, in dealing with the Roma problems, and haven't granting them participation in the societies they are living until today for the last 600 hundred years. The Situation haven't change, even more since Hitler came to power and pushed Europe and its dealing with the Roma and Sinti to the Barbarism. The old Europe haven't make any change in this, even worse the prejudices in this Context are there until today, because none is questioning them.

No problem is solve if no one is really starting with solving it, solving it in a manner without national interests.

In a democracy the highest good is justice, but it's impracticable if the justice is blind for the other side, the Side of the so called gypsies.

Adapting practises and projects on Roma never worked because of the reason to deal with them like an object and not including them like mature partners and input givers. This is different in the EZAF: Roma, Sinti, Majority Society, scientists and Experts from Roma and from Non- Roma Societies are working together to overcome and solve the Problems together from different views. Through this fair cooperation between different people, who are respecting each other, the problems are discussed with no limits.

Organisational Information

The **European Centre for Antiziganism Research (EZAF)** is a non-profit and non-governmental Institute with the aim to expose Antiziganistic ways of thinking in their mental and structural formation in the Federal Republic of Germany and in other European countries and thus to take influence on these discriminating practices, with

the assistance of cooperation partners in all Europe and with the instruments of scientific analysis. The EZAF applied for consultative status to the **European Roma and Travellers Forum**.

The EZAF is a federation of emeritus and active professors from the universities Hamburg, Berlin, Marburg and Schwerin as well as representatives of the Rom and Cinti Union in Hamburg. The Centre joined the University of Hamburg in the form of a free scientific institution as an affiliated institute.

In the Moment 16 mainly Non-Roma professors and doctors are involved through the Scientific Commission to EZAF. Experts are mainly German, because Germany is the only country where Antiziganistic Researches are done in the context of the Anti-Semitism. Until the EZAF united this experts on Antiziganism, even they where discriminated through ignorance by there colleagues because no one granted the "Antiziganism" the same role as the "Anti-Semitism".

Further the Roma and Sinti Commission of EZAF represented by Roma and Sinti who are an equivalent to the Scientific Commission working to undertake **together** the step to fight Antiziganism. Just the discriminated can define that he has been discriminated and not the Person who discriminates. This is the approach the EZAF. The Roma and Sinti are to be empowered and the need for a fair participation in the existing structures and institutions have be enforced.

This non-profit organisation was founded following an international conference on the theme "The failure of scientific thinking in Roma research" in July 2004, which was collectively prepared and organised.

The conference could be realised thanks to financial funding from the **Anti-discrimination budget line of the European Commission to the JOIN Project**. EZAF therefore owes its foundation to the financial support of the European Commission.

Methodology of the project

The research attitude and the scientific self-conception of the EZAF members are geared in critical memory to the unspeakable "Gypsy research" of the Nazis such as Dr. Ritter, and follow the maxim not to do research about and not for, but together with the Roma and Sinti in order to analyse the Antiziganistic problem situation.

As a further consequence of the lessons of history, the decision was made not to do research on subjects, but in the sense of Nobel laureate **Amartya Sen "to favour the creation of conditions in which people have real opportunities of judging the kind of lives they would like to lead. Social and economic factors such as basic education, elementary health care, and secure employment are important ... for the role they can play in giving people the opportunity to approach the world with courage and freedom"**

The centre of research attention will thus not be the question in how far the subjects are able or unable to adapt to the specific circumstances, but whether the circumstances provide the necessary opportunities for the subjects' "capability".

In other words: Concerning questions of identity and the integration of Sinti and Roma into modern society, we understand identity as a fragile construct that denies

an objectifying access, and: Integration is not in the first place an obligation of the minority, but essentially an active effort of the majority population.

We strictly divide the two basic fields:

- a. Antiziganistic phenomena of the social institutions on the one hand and
- b. the experiences, attitudes, reservations and interests of the concerned (Sinti and Roma) on the other hand.

The researcher groups are also differentiated:

- a. Scientists and scientific staff from the Roma/Sinti community together with non-Roma scientists analyse the social Antiziganistic phenomena.
- b. The research within the Roma/Sinti population is exclusively done by Roma/Sinti staff (trust issue).

All research will be cooperatively coordinated with the national and international partners during each of the different analysis phases, results will be compared and critically/correctively assessed.

Practical Projects:

1. Education, School System

Research of the Antiziganism in the school systems and the reasons why Roma and Sinti children are getting to mentally retarded schools even if their mentally situation don't make it necessary.

2. State Authority (Police/Justice/Administration/Politics)

Monitoring them and creation of an White Book to document Antiziganism in the society and to enhance and create the political correctness towards the Roma and Sinti people in Europe.

3. Media

Monitoring and Consulting the Medias, because the Medias are creating and upholding the Antiziganism prejudices day by day. Bring attention of the Medias to existing regulations of the European Parliament and Commission not to report negatively about a Minority.

4. Legal Resource Centre

To monitor, and to give grants to individuals and NGOs to finance advocates for, discriminatory cases.

Note: If you need more details for the Projects, we have them ready and can forward them to you as you need them.

Summary:

Racism, xenophobia and discrimination of ethnic minorities are – as far as the attitude of a majority population towards the Roma and Sinti is concerned - forms of creating an inner-social enemy, which results in social, educational and political exclusion, if not persecution and expulsion. Social institutions (school, police, justice, administration, politics, media, etc.) are involved in these processes as leading and executing organs.

The means of scientific analysis must be used for combating racism exactly where it takes concrete shape.

Scientific research, though, may not be satisfied with simply analysing these appearances, it also has the duty to actively influence developments – in the sense of *Amartya Sen* – to a point where socially discriminated people are given the space and opportunity to realise their way of living like they choose to. In this special case this means that the integration attempts of the Sinti and Roma must be met by the societies they are living in by giving them the opportunity to fulfil their capabilities.

This is without doubt a mutual process: The will for integration of the Roma and Sinti community comes together with the demand to the majority population to accept and respect the right to be different.

The “problem” of the Sinti and Roma is therefore not primarily a problem of the Sinti and Roma, but first of all a problem of acceptance and sensitive reflexivity of the major population.

But this major population is still far away from wanting to accept this demand, even though it stems from the philosophical enlightenment.

The scientific work of the “Centre for Antiziganism Research” sees itself in this enlightened tradition.

On the 8th and 9th of October 2005 the Second International Antiziganism Conference will take place in the Hamburg University with the Title:
“Antiziganism Reseach: Modells, Theories and Practise.

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